

Interview with Anita Grew English

The Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training Foreign Affairs Oral History Project
Foreign Service Spouse Series

ANITA GREW ENGLISH

Interviewed by: Marian Phillips

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Q: This interview with Anita Grew English is for the Foreign Service Family Oral History Project. It is 3:30 in the afternoon on Thursday, December 8th, and we are at Mrs. Grew's house. I am Marian Phillips. Mrs. English, I want first to thank you for lending me your father's books. They were wonderfully helpful. Reading them was like eating peanuts. I kept thinking I'll just read one more page and then it would be another page, and another page. And it told me so much that I'd never thought about before. In particular, I was impressed by the descriptions of the homes that you lived in—Denmark. You probably don't remember Berlin, do you?

ENGLISH: The second house in Berlin.

Q: The second house in Berlin.

ENGLISH: Because I was then three years old.

Q: Oh, what a good memory you have. Well, was there a similar feel to the house in Berlin and in Denmark and in Turkey?

ENGLISH: The atmosphere changed according to my growing up so that in Berlin it was from a height of a very young thing. The halls were so high...

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Q: *Oh, yes.*

ENGLISH: And then I remember so many doors. It was an apartment with many doors. I remember the whole home in Denmark and in Turkey. Those homes were sort of complete homes, whereas in Berlin, it's just what a baby would remember.

Q: *Oh, yes. Your sister Lilla, I think she said it was kind of a palace in Denmark.*

ENGLISH: Oh, yes that was in Denmark. Yes.

Q: *Is that the way you remember it...kind of a palace?*

ENGLISH: Yes, it was fascinating because the royal palace was made up of four buildings which made a square and an avenue came in splitting up the four buildings. And one was for the residence, one was for the one part of the family. The part we abutted on was the reception, the social area. So our garden wall looked right into their ballroom windows and when they had very ceremonial parties, things going on, we were very aware of it, and as children we'd climb up on the shed in the garden (this was in the daytime, we could do this) get up on the shed in the garden and hang onto the wall and watch things. [laughter]

Q: *What fun! Kind of box seats.*

ENGLISH: Box seats, yes. I remember that. And then the changing of the guard affected us because we'd see that happening right outside our front windows and the different palaces....the four buildings, it was really sort of all one palace.

Q: *And then your father described the home, the embassy in Turkey, as being very large and spacious.*

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ENGLISH: Large rooms, high ceilings. It was an Italian, like an Italian mansion - very few rooms...no consideration for bedrooms or anything like that. It was very good for entertaining.

Q: *Oh, I see.*

ENGLISH: Big hall, big reception room, wonderful library. And then the rooms were sort of shoved off, the bedrooms were shoved off.

Q: *People weren't supposed to sleep [laughs]*

ENGLISH: Or to be comfortable, no [laughs].

Q: *Well, actually, it sounded almost like a fairy tale.*

ENGLISH: Oh, it was.

Q: *It was? Is that the way you felt about it as a child or is that the way you feel now looking back?*

ENGLISH: When I got to Turkey, I was already eighteen, so that I had something to compare it to, and it was exciting, it was glamorous. It was a new setting, completely [exotic] to anything I was used to.

Q: *The Turkish ones.*

ENGLISH: Yes. And in Denmark, it was more adjusting to the - having friends, talking Danish, learning to talk Danish with them, the wonderful - I think belonging to a family of four girls, we were fortunately the four of us were good friends and close in age, so we didn't have many other friends to start with.

Q: *Oh, I see.*

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ENGLISH: And we'd enjoy so much doing thing together

Q: Yes.

ENGLISH: And I remember Denmark bicycling. We all had bicycles and we had such a part of Denmark.

Q: Well, I'm very unfamiliar with Foreign Service. Do you regard this as typical of other - the homes and the experience - of other Foreign Service children had, or do you think yours was unique for any reason? Or if not unique, unusual?

ENGLISH: No. I don't think it was unusual. I think that you do find out that moving around a whole family together that way suddenly transplanted - you're very much a belonging family. It binds you as a family. I think that's very typical of the Foreign Service, in my growing up.

Q: Yes.

ENGLISH: And then you get so interested when other nationality children were brought in to be friends with you - into the picture - and you get to know other nationalities. I never, never had the experience of questioning what nationality somebody was, or their language, or their religion, or [questioning] anything. It was somebody to play with or do something with.

Q: Yes. A very serendipitous...

ENGLISH: Yes, yes. You may want to scrub all this because it's so - it's not typical, it's personal.

Q: No, I hope it is typical.

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ENGLISH: I lived long enough ago that you didn't move around as a family, and you didn't leave a part of the family home when you went abroad to a post.

Q: *I see.*

ENGLISH: My parents took - until the war years, the first World War, then we had to be separated.

Q: *Well in addition to this effect of binding together as a family, did you feel that - well, this as I say fairy tale existence was typical. I mean, you lived in beautiful homes. You mingled with royalty, certainly, in Denmark and in Turkey. If not royalty, the high level officials. Is this also typical or was this unusual?*

ENGLISH: That was typical but not noticeable. How do I express that? It didn't make any impression on me that it was glamorous until the retrospect.

Q: *Yes, I see.*

ENGLISH: But what was in that house in Denmark - one ballroom was saved for my mother and father's parties and the other was given to us as a schoolroom. And we had school desks put up in it and we had a wonderful table to play games on. That was one of the ballrooms. Imagine living in a house with two ballrooms.

Q: *I'll bet [laughter]*

ENGLISH: And yet we took it so for granted, we just sort of took it in stride. It was very happy, very happy but it was only later I thought imagine that big ballroom that was the other end of the house...one for the parties. And I just took it all for granted.

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Q: And so many people have never lived in a house even with one ballroom. [laughs] It's probably horrifying even of me to ask this question. Did you ride your bicycles around that ballroom in bad weather?

ENGLISH: Oh, no. But you can well ask that because we were very rough and tumble [laughter]. We played a lot of games in the schoolroom ballroom. No, but bicycling was out of doors.

Q: That sounds lovely. When did you develop your interest in swimming?

ENGLISH: That was really - I had learnt swimming in Turkey - such a place for swimming in the Bosphorus. I loved swimming. I always have. I can look back there in Denmark by the beach, we had two summers by the beach when I was there, eleven years old. And it was in Turkey that I had such opportunities to swim and go swimming across from Europe to Asia and back from Asia to Europe.

Q: How exciting [laughter].

ENGLISH: As a natural thing. It sounds unbelievable, really.

Q: Well, what inspired you to swim the length of the Bosphorus?

ENGLISH: Oh, that, I'm sure our father was very responsible for that because he loved swimming and he knew I loved long distance swimming, cause you see I swim breaststroke, always have to look around and enjoy what I'm seeing. And he loved swimming himself. He'd swim across from Europe to Asia with me and back again in front of our summer house. And I think - I forget how it got started - I one day said that I'd love to swim from the Black Sea to the Mamara. And he latched on to that and I tried one year and didn't quite make it. So then we repeated it the next year. But it was he who said in August, "Don't you think it's about time to get [laughter]..."

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Q: He wasn't going to let you forget, was he?

ENGLISH: No he loved the idea.

Q: I see. Had you heard of someone else?

ENGLISH: No one had done it.

Q: No one had... It was just an idea.

ENGLISH: It was an idea, to swim from one sea to the other. It was a pleasant swim, across the straits of the Bosphorus - lovely scenically. It was nineteen miles by the clock.

Q: Well, that just blew my mind when I heard nineteen miles. And I don't mean to dismiss this, you did have the help of the current?

ENGLISH: That's it. Oh, yes. From the Black Sea, the current comes down through the Bosphorus. It was not a real swim - I would not call it much of a feat because for one thing it was - you've got to know the currents and also there's no fear in it. It was not...it wasn't any fear of not being able to make it because if you wanted to stop, you were very near the shore.

Q: I see.

ENGLISH: It's only about a mile wide.

Q: And there was a boat traveling...

ENGLISH: Oh, yes, oh yes.

Q: Traveling with you. Well, I think I remember your father saying that there were approaching craft.

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ENGLISH: Oh, yes.

Q: Who weren't all that willing to give you the right of way sometimes.

ENGLISH: Yes, that was exciting [laughs]. It was an exciting happening because it was the first time anybody had done it there and our friends got interested and I'm reminded periodically by friends that as we passed a, for instance, a summer embassy of the Germans, they dipped their flags.

Q: Oh, how lovely.

ENGLISH: As we passed the Italian Embassy, they dipped their flag to salute. It was exciting because they knew I was going to do it.

Q: Well that, I guess, makes me think of something else. At the time of your marriage, your father says that you asked the British ambassador - of whom no who was particularly fond, I believe he said - to be a witness.

ENGLISH: Yes.

Q: Now was there - this was just a particular friend of the...

ENGLISH: Of my mother's and father's, yes.

Q: Of your mother's and father's.

ENGLISH: And he just [accepted] the whole family. And he didn't have any children there, and he just took us all in as friends. We did a lot together - picnics, parties and excursions. He was a wonderful person, such a good friend. He was a very natural one to choose as a witness.

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Q: Well, I thought that was a delightful thing to read. But now with the Italians in the embassy and the Germans dipped their flags to you, was this?

ENGLISH: We were all friends...

Q: You were all friends together, yes.

ENGLISH: It was still a time of peace amongst nations. And that was such a happy time because we were friends with all of them. It was wonderful.

Q: Well, it sounds wonderful and the descriptions of some of the parties. You must have had some really great parties [laughs]. I've got a quotation, two of them here, that I hope will remind you of something. One was, "Anita danced steadily all evening." This was at a ball in Constantinople on the Turkish national holiday, October 29th, 1927. And then three years later in October, he says, "I had a perfectly splendid Blue Danube waltz with Anita, with the old Vienna step. She got into it at once and danced it magnificently which resulted in many compliments from high quarters." Do you remember either of those?

ENGLISH: Well, I don't remember why he would write that, but I do know this, that when the Blue Danube was struck up, I would catch his eye across the crowd. He would always want me to be sure to have the Blue Danube with him.

Q: Oh.

ENGLISH: And waltzes, Viennese waltzes, he'd catch my eye and sometimes he'd let other people go in order to have the dance with me [laughs].

Q: Well, you were just very good at the Blue Danube?

ENGLISH: No, but we were very in tune.

Q: Yes.

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ENGLISH: And the old fashioned way of dancing the Viennese waltzes, and he seemed to enjoy it. No, it wasn't anything to watch, it was something to experience from my point of view. And I know that it meant something to my father because he was also, he was old fashioned in his way of waltzing and having, you know, that simple love of that music.

Q: Yes. You seem even at parties to enjoy a family togetherness, that I notice.

ENGLISH: Yes, we did, we did. And I think that's one thing that you can have in the Foreign Service. You very often go out to a party, the parents and the young, to the same party, and it is a mingling and...

Q: Well, I just thought it was interesting that the parties seemed to be multi generational.

ENGLISH: Yes, that's right.

Q: Well, as I say, it just sounds kind of like a fairy tale. [laughs]

ENGLISH: Well, as you help me look back and see it as quite magical and glamorous and I loved it all.

Q: Did you find that same ambience (that's not the right word, I guess) later as in your career as a Foreign Service wife, or had there been a change in the times or a change in the location?

ENGLISH: So many changes. For one thing - split up of the family - you know one time we were on four different continents, the family.

Q: Oh my.

ENGLISH: My parents on one, and the three daughters each on another continent. We were all split up though that in the Foreign Service is a very natural thing.

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Q: Yes.

ENGLISH: But when I married, We went to Budapest. You couldn't stay in the same country as your parents. Anyway they went to Japan at that time.

Q: Yes, *I remember.*

ENGLISH: And so my husband was assigned to Budapest. I think they gave it to us as a wedding gift [laughs].

Q: *Oh, that does sound the most glamorous of your assignments.*

ENGLISH: But he was so sick. He spent the first year being very, very sick. And it was a tough time. Budapest was getting used to a totally different life because I'd never had to think in terms of anything to do with the mechanics of living. I'd been looked after. And then suddenly I had to run a little house and look after things and a very sick husband, and I grew up fast.

Q: Yes.

ENGLISH: Budapest was the beginning of the changing of times in this way, too. I remember my husband coming back from the office one day and saying, "We've got to have lunch with the new German Secretary and his wife. They want to have a quiet lunch just with us. And now be very discreet, just do more listening, be very discreet." And he knew then what I didn't realize, I didn't know enough to realize they were wanting to make contacts because they were Nazis infiltrating.

Q: *Oh.*

ENGLISH: And they wanted to have contacts with the different embassies and different diplomats.

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Q: *Oh my.*

ENGLISH: And they were sort of our corresponding (we were third secretary at the time) they were the new third secretary. And they were going to be - what would you call it?

Q: *A listening post?*

ENGLISH: Well, yes. They were going to find out what they could.

Q: *Oh, my goodness.*

ENGLISH: And...but I didn't realize until things developed how much the Nazis were already infiltrating.

Q: *Yes, and that was early on.*

ENGLISH: That was early on. That was in 1934. They really already were...

Q: *Oh, dear. That must have been an experience. Well then you found, that your childhood as a Foreign Service child was not particularly helpful in being the wife of...*

ENGLISH: No, no. It was a completely sheltered, happy childhood, wonderful times, and all sorts of good things, very happy. And then suddenly I became a wife and things crowded in.

Q: *Yes. I dare say you were much more comfortable with the social amenities that some other Foreign Service wives might have been?*

ENGLISH: Yes, because I had grown up with it. It was a natural thing. It was a natural thing to mix all ages and to constantly having people you didn't know come to a meal or you go to meals with people you didn't know, in order to meet them.

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Q: But making the logistical arrangements was difficult for you. I see.

ENGLISH: Yes, yes.

Q: Well, that is interesting. That reminds me that I heard a name. Was it Cornelia Bassel... This was after somebody decided there should be training for Foreign Service wives. She was listed in some of the literature I got. Someone set up a school for training Foreign Service officers. Did you...

ENGLISH: We didn't experience that at all. I think I remember now the name. That was in Washington and I didn't experience any of that. My husband was already in the Foreign Service, and up to that time I didn't really know what was going on. The only thing I remember when the two services were blended—the Consular Service and the Foreign Service became one. I was old enough to appreciate that that was quite a happening there in Washington. Other than that, I didn't know much about the preparation or - sometimes we knew when friends of ours were taking the Foreign Service exams.

Q: Oh, yes.

ENGLISH: We had the written exam and then they could go for the oral, and how difficult that was.

Q: Had your husband had to do that?

ENGLISH: He had had to do that, but before I met him. He was already in the Service.

Q: I think your father didn't have to do anything.

ENGLISH: No. He had to just shoot a tiger.

Q: Yes. [laughter] That was a lovely story. Oh, do tell it. I think that should be on tape for people. Could you tell that story?

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ENGLISH: Let me see if I can. He went around the world after college and during his time in China, he had wanted to do some big game shooting. And he had such an event, in being shown where the tigers were. He got into a cave and it was a question of him shooting the tiger or the tiger attacking him.

Q: *Oh, boy.*

ENGLISH: And he shot and got that tiger. It was very dramatic as a scary really impromptu happening, you might say. But he wanted to get a tiger and he got one. Well, later in the... He got to Egypt in the Foreign Service. No, his name came up because it was completely political. You were allowed to get into the Foreign Service if you were appointed by the President as a political appointment.

Q: *I see.*

ENGLISH: And President Roosevelt heard that Joe Grew had shot a tiger. Oh, yes, of course, he could and he got Cairo as his first post.

Q: *[laughs] This was Theodore.*

ENGLISH: Yes, yes.

Q: *He loved shoots, didn't he?*

ENGLISH: And then, if you were in the Service, then you progressed according to your boss and your experiences.

Q: *The contact.*

ENGLISH: The contact and my father had a very interesting sequence of posts but finally, well from Cairo and Mexico and then St. Petersburg and then Berlin. And when he was in

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Berlin Theodore Roosevelt was coming to visit and he said, "I want to meet that man, Joe Grew, who shot the tiger."

Q: *[laughs]*

ENGLISH: And once again there was a big embassy party and the President looked at the list and he said, "Yes, but where's the lunch with Joe Grew?" And so that was put on...that he wanted to have lunch with Joe Grew cause he shot the tiger.

Q: *[laughs]*

ENGLISH: And it was a wonderful connection for my father because he so enjoyed... And they remained friends always. I remember meeting Mrs. Roosevelt, Edith Roosevelt, later. She was a darling. But they became such friends because of this tiger. *[laughter]*

Q: *Well, believe me, if you had visited Sagamore Hill on Long Island and seen all these heads of moose and everything else hanging around the wall, you'd get a chuckle out of the story, even if you didn't ever get to know Theodore Roosevelt.*

ENGLISH: I didn't know him, but in Sagamore Hill we saw... I went there to lunch with Mrs. Roosevelt with my parents, and saw all the evidences of the big game hunting, and so it sort of has followed my father through his career that he got into the Service because he had shot a tiger *[laughter]*.

Q: *Well, I think that's lovely. Your mention of the name Edith reminds me of your oldest sister. That was so tragic.*

ENGLISH: That was tragic. That was a real tragedy. She was just eighteen and beautiful and very... She was a wonderful person. She just got smitten by what they called malignant scarlet fever. It was very rapid.

Q: *Yes. Was she there with a school group?*

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ENGLISH: We were on Easter vacation trip to Italy with the school that my two sisters were at. I'd also been at the school, so I was allowed to go on the trip. And they would take Easter vacation trips for two weeks to Italy. We were in Venice when she had such a sore throat and so she couldn't leave with the rest of us when we had to leave, and that very night she died.

Q: Oh, mercy. That was rapid.

ENGLISH: It was rapid.

Q: Was she hospitalized?

ENGLISH: No. I think that there wasn't even time for that. It was in the hotel room. One of the teachers who was looking after us stayed with her and she came down with serious scarlet fever afterwards.

Q: The teacher?

ENGLISH: Yes. But this malignant scarlet fever was something we hadn't encountered and it was so sudden. It finished off our mother for quite a while. It was terrible.

Q: Oh, I'm sure. What a loss.

ENGLISH: It was a loss for the whole family.

Q: I remember reading a comment about both the son of Calvin Coolidge and the son of Abraham Lincoln, and the comment was that five dollars for penicillin probably would have saved the life of each of those.

ENGLISH: Yes.

Q: And perhaps the same thing could be said of your sister.

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ENGLISH: Yes, there's no way of knowing what could have saved her. And then Calvin Coolidge's son died while we were in Washington. He got a blister on his heel.

Q: Yes, which seems so ordinary, but then hadn't blood poisoning set in?

ENGLISH: And then Charles Evans Hughes who was also, he was Secretary of State at the time we were there, he had a daughter who had suddenly died very near our time when we were there. Very sudden. And we think of the people who have shared in the same sort of tragedies that we have had.

Q: Tragedies, yes, yes. I didn't know that about Justice Hughes. I'm watching this tape now because it's about to run off and I don't want to be in the middle of a nifty conversation when I have to turn it over.

ENGLISH: Well, I don't feel I'm very satisfied.

Q: You just don't know how wonderful this is [laughter]. I'll just be looking over my list while I look for this little old tape to run out. It's probably- (end of tape)

ENGLISH: I'm afraid I talked too personally.

Q: No, no. This is fine. But what interesting historic...

ENGLISH: Boardman and Polando's flight non stop flight.

Q: Yes. Do tell me about that.

ENGLISH: That was so exciting. Do you want to hear about it.

Q: Yes. And do give their full names, please, because I don't remember having heard about those two men.

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ENGLISH: I'll have to fill those in.

Q: *Oh, now let's see. I think I have them somewhere—Russell Boardman...*

ENGLISH: Russell Boardman and...

Q: *...John Polando, yes.*

ENGLISH: Yes. That was so exciting because Lindbergh's flight had been just before we left this country to go to Turkey and you can see how flying was not yet something that was taken for granted. And so one summer in Turkey - I think it was the summer of 1931 - we heard that there was going to be a flight coming into Constantinople from Boston and two flyers were going to do it non stop. And we didn't see how it could be done. But my father was excited that we could go down to the airfield and we would meet them. But to gauge how long it would take... We had nothing to measure by.

Q: *Of course not.*

ENGLISH: And they had told us that the earliest they could get in was in the evening. And we couldn't believe that it was non stop, but we were ready to. And we went out to the airfield, I remember, at dusk. And we stayed and stayed and stayed. And you didn't have a lot of planes in the air to listen to. If anything happened to be in the air, it was unusual. And finally, I think, around one or two in the morning, my father said to me, "Well I think something's happened. They can't possibly come in now. We'll go home." We were, oh, about thirty miles from home. And we got into the car, obedient daughter got in with my father to come back and we had just started to leave the airfield and Daddy said, "But I'd hate to miss it if they did."

Q: *[laughs]*

ENGLISH: I said, "Daddy, let's go back." Of course I wanted to go back.

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Q: *Surely.*

ENGLISH: So we waited. I forget now what time at dawn they arrived. Was it five in the morning or what? But we sat out there and daylight came and suddenly this... We heard something and we saw this little yellow plane in the sky. And we knew it must be they because nothing else was going to be coming in. And it did, it was. And as we got out there where they were going to be able to land, we could see as they landed, the second head appeared and then on the ground we saw them clasping their hands like this—they had done it!

Q: Yes.

ENGLISH: During the time of coming down when we first saw them, Polando was in the tail trying to balance the plane [laughter] because they had made themselves so light that in order to keep the plane as balanced as possible, he had to crawl down into the tail.

Q: *Oh, my goodness.*

ENGLISH: And then he came forward, when they were on the ground. We saw them clasping hands. It was such an exciting happy thing for them. It was successful. They hadn't touched ground since leaving this country.

Q: *Fantastic!*

ENGLISH: It was non stop. They told us some hair raising stories. One was that they were following the Danube because of the fog. They couldn't see very well any distance, so they followed the Danube to give them steering. This was at a period before you had instruments.

Q: Yes, yes.

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ENGLISH: And suddenly, the clouds lifted enough so they could see the great big elbow of the Danube and they were able to cut across I don't remember how many miles. It may have been one hundred kilometers of Danube they were able to cut off. When they landed they had gas for only fourteen more kilometers.

Q: Oh, mercy! [laughs]

ENGLISH: Things like that. If they hadn't been able to cut off that little bit of the Danube and catch, pick it up again nearer, they couldn't have made it. They told story after story and then they had two frozen chickens, two roasted chickens and they had to throw one out in order to lighten their load.

Q: Oh, my goodness [laughs]. That must have been all of three or four pounds. That made that much difference?

ENGLISH: And I remember Sir George Clark saying, "well somebody over France had themselves a good Sunday dinner." [laughter]

Q: That's a delicious story.

ENGLISH: they told all sorts of stories on that wonderful trip. They were very rewarding heroes because it had such courage and such little experience to do something as new as that, and yet, they had all the wonderful American qualities, and...

Q: Very heartwarming.

ENGLISH: It was very heartwarming. They were given a royal ten days in Turkey, and, oh, one very touching thing I'm going to throw in here. They were touched that we waited on that field for them so many hours beyond when they might have arrived. And when I did my swim, I got a cable from them together, Boardman and Polando: "We wish we could have waited for you as you waited for us." And I thought that was very sweet.

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Q: Yes, *indeed it was.*

ENGLISH: Very nice. That was one of my treasures.

Q: *Of course. I remember seeing pictures of the enormous crowd of people who awaited Lindbergh's arrival. But I sense that there were not that many people on the airfield.*

ENGLISH: No. And also in Turkey, it wasn't... So few people knew about it. It was so unheralded. And there weren't enough people to make a crowd, like around Paris.

Q: *Well, now, how did you hear about it?*

ENGLISH: Well, because of my father being at their headquarters.

Q: *They alerted him for that reason?*

ENGLISH: Yes. And to get all the Americans who could be contacted to know about it.

Q: *Oh, that's a wonderful story. The sort of thing that makes me want to stand up and wave the flag, and a very healthy way.*

ENGLISH: And they were such... We were so proud of them because they were very simple, unassuming... They let Mustapha come out, the Turkish president, then let him show them all sorts of things in Turkey that were precious to him and entertained for them. It was a very, very good happening.

Q: *Very goodwill ambassadors, completely naturally. Oh, that's a wonderful story. I'm so glad you mentioned it.*

ENGLISH: Well, that was one of my childhood, youth delights, being there for that, and I was able to pass on to my great nephew, Edith's son Jay, who is a pilot and flies and has

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such an interest in flying, and he worked at the Space museum in Washington several years ago. I passed on to him all my data on that flight and the photographs and the diary.

Q: Oh, I'm sure he treasured it.

ENGLISH: Yes. Because it all meant so much to him to have the story of it.

Q: You have something else that you jotted down there?

ENGLISH: No, no. I jotted down things in case you asked. I remember some things like when President Wilson came to Paris for the signing of the Peace Treaty.

Q: Oh, yes, well, please tell me.

ENGLISH: Well, I will tell you a little personal thing on that.

Q: Yes, please.

ENGLISH: My mother came over on the ship to Paris with him. My father was already in Paris. And so during that time he told my mother to bring us four little girls to tea. And we went to tea and he asked us each in turn where we were born. And it was quite a little list. And then he said, "Oh, a little League of Nations!" [laughter] And I always remember that, because it was just when the League of Nations was being formed.

Q: Now, let's see, I think I have it. Maybe you remember Edith was born in Normandy...

ENGLISH: Yes, she was born in Giverny, but it was in France, yes.

Q: And Lilla was born...

ENGLISH: St. Petersburg.

Q: And you...Berlin...

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ENGLISH: And Elsie in Vienna.

Q: It's interesting that Elsie is called Elsie. Her name is Elizabeth, isn't it?

ENGLISH: She's always been called Elsie.

Q: Well, all right. [laughter] Well I'm glad you jotted that one down, too. Was there another one.

ENGLISH: The President had to leave the room and he said, "I've got to go and be photographed." And I remember him at the door, turning around and saying, "They tell me it doesn't hurt very much." [laughter] And so then we went on with the visit with Mrs. Wilson. But I always remember those little bits, very human interest details of somebody who was so busy and yet had time to make a little joke and amuse children.

Q: Yes, isn't that a nice story.

ENGLISH: No. I haven't got any stories to... The Boardman and Polando thing was the chief important... But I was just keeping track of the countries I had been in.

Q: Oh, well, do tell me.

ENGLISH: But one thing. We were in Turkey for a couple of very interesting happenings. And I thought this might interest you. We were there when suddenly the Ghazi decided they would use Latin letters instead of the Arabic letters for their alphabet.

Q: Just all of a sudden?

ENGLISH: All of a sudden.

Q: Oh, mercy.

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ENGLISH: I don't know how long it was brewing, but it happened overnight from one day to the next. You couldn't find any Arabic writing, it had to all be the Latin. So of course there were no newspapers. They were to be set up again in Latin writing...Latin letters. And people had to learn the letters.

Q: *My goodness.*

ENGLISH: Old and young had to learn.

Q: *An entire country!*

ENGLISH: An entire country changed. Now I say it was overnight. I don't know how it brewed before it, but it [occurred] overnight.

Q: *Oh, mercy.*

ENGLISH: And that was so dramatic, the trying to get the letters changed everywhere, street signs, shop names, newspapers. That was a very dramatic time.

Q: *I should say.*

ENGLISH: I was too young to get the [full impact]. And the other dramatic happening in Turkey which was practically overnight—no more fezes—the men couldn't wear fezes.

Q: *Oh, had they always worn fezes?*

ENGLISH: They had always worn fezes. They couldn't have anything to stop them from putting their foreheads on the ground for the five times a day praying. So when they got all these American caps with visors, they'd have to turn them around [laughter] so they could touch and keep their heads covered, and yet touch their foreheads to the ground. So they looked so cockeyed in these American caps with visors.

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Q: Kind of baseball caps?

ENGLISH: Yes.

Q: When one is wearing a fez, when you lean over to touch the ground, you may keep the fez on. It doesn't fall off. Well, the idea of doing away with the fezes, was this just part of the Westernization?

ENGLISH: That was it, because the fez was too prehistoric for them. They were making it a very modern country. There were several things like that that were happening during those five years we were in Turkey.

Q: Was there any alteration decree for the style of womens' dress in any way at the time, do you remember?

ENGLISH: I don't remember it being decreed, but you'd see many, many Turkish women mostly in European dress. Of course, in the outskirts of the cities you'd see the women in the black veils.

Q: And long dresses?

ENGLISH: Long dresses and also garments that covered everything except their eyes.

Q: Yes.

ENGLISH: They have the - I forget what the word was - much like something like they would cover their...

Q: Yes. I can see it, but I wouldn't know the word either. But there was no decree that you recall?

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ENGLISH: I don't remember there being a decree and it came about gradually, but that had started happening by the army of occupation being in Constantinople. Quite a while. Sort of started the women freeing themselves into modern clothes.

Q: It predated the decree about the fezes then?

ENGLISH: Yes, oh, yes.

Q: Isn't that interesting that an army of occupation would have this effect on them? Were there many European women there?

ENGLISH: Yes. Many European women and very cosmopolitan. And the Turkish women wanted to talk French rather than Turkish.

Q: I see. this would be at a certain social level.

ENGLISH: A certain social or certain educational... More educational than social, I think, because everybody we ran into would want to first start talking in French, rather than have you struggle with Turkish.

Q: Now, you as children, were you multilingual?

ENGLISH: Every country I went to I wanted to learn the language.

Q: Good for you.

ENGLISH: But we had grown up with French and German, but got very... You didn't get very far with Turkish or Hungarian or Danish.

Q: I would think not.

ENGLISH: Because they all wanted to practice their English or French.

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Q: I've heard that's still a problem and they are very different languages, too. They would be more difficult to learn, I would think, the Turkish and the Hungarian.

ENGLISH: One thing interested me so much about languages. I just thought of this during last night. When I was in Hungary I found some words that were just the same as in Turkish. And I learned that there was a tribe that came from the East that split up three ways: one group to Finland, one to Hungary and one to Turkey.

Q: Is that right?

ENGLISH: And certain words are the same in all three languages. And you can see how separate they are geographically now, but they brought the roots of certain parts of speech along with them.

Q: Isn't that interesting.

ENGLISH: That interested me very much. Languages always interested me enormously.

Q: Well, me, too, and I hate to see what's happening to English these days.

ENGLISH: Oh, don't you, yes.

Q: I found another quotation. Well first I want to say I think your mother must have been a beautiful woman. The picture of her, I guess, she was dressed for a party in Berlin. It is just one of the loveliest photographs I have ever seen.

ENGLISH: Isn't it.

Q: Well, everything I read about her in the book was lovely. She was a gracious, gracious woman, beautiful...

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ENGLISH: And such a good sport because you know she had been paralyzed. Her whole right side had been paralyzed in Mexico. And yet with that inconvenience you could say, she was such a good sport going and doing and being...

Q: When did that happen?

ENGLISH: Right at the beginning of their career.

Q: No, mercy, I don't remember reading about that, but I couldn't read every single page of those thousand pages.

ENGLISH: No, and it didn't curtail her, so that it wouldn't be referred to. But we as her daughters marveled at how she kept up and kept doing and, she had problems and one always respected it.

Q: My goodness. Was that the result of an accident?

ENGLISH: No. It was the altitude in Mexico.

Q: Oh, I think I remember now reading that they had to leave Mexico, yes, because of her health. Well then, this statement that I read from your father's diary is even more impressive, I think. He went home and told your mother that they would be leaving Turkey and going to Japan. And he says that she was so sorry to leave Turkey where they'd all been so happy. But she took a great deal of pleasure in the importance, and as he put it, of our new job in Tokyo. And then he says, and this is the quotation, "I say 'our job' because in 'our job' a wife is fully half the team, often the better half. And I do not for a moment delude myself by thinking that I could ever have pulled the boat to this point upstream alone." Just tell me how that strikes you.

ENGLISH: Yes, yes. Oh, that is so true. My father needed my mother so much. She was so much a part of the team. She really was magnificent those 10 years in Japan. They

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were especially shiny for her because she had lived in Japan as a girl for three years and she loved it. So that the harmony, the adjusting there and loving the delicacy of the Japanese people made it so possible for her to enter right in to the spirit and the customs. And then came the war. And they were not imprisoned. They were impounded, yes, for so many months there in Japan until they could be evacuated to a safe place. And during that time my mother helped keep all the embassy staff and all of the people who were impounded...

Q: Interned.

ENGLISH: Interned, is the word. They all have sung her praises so much, how she kept their spirits up. She had French lessons, bridge lessons, anything that could be helpful or diversionary and shared anything with them that she could. Keeping in touch with some of her Japanese friends was very dangerous, and yet she had such good friends. Some of them risked their lives keeping in touch with my mother and father because they felt so badly about our going to war together because the Japanese and the Americans weren't meant to fight. And they could be such good friends.

Q: Well, she sounds thoroughly admirable.

ENGLISH: She was admirable and people have often told us of little things that she did to make their time of internment easier.

Q: Would you say that your father's statement, "a wife is fully half the team" applies to Foreign Service wives in general?

ENGLISH: I think that depends very much on the post and the man. It can be because certainly a wife can be an albatross or a handicap, but I know many cases where it's made all the difference - the wife doing her part so well. There's a real role, a real job for a wife. And you're always on the job - it's a twenty-four hour a day job. That I experienced.

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Q: *You weren't aware of that before you went in or were you?*

ENGLISH: It was natural.

Q: *Natural for you.*

ENGLISH: Because I'd grown up in it.

Q: *Do you suppose that someone who had not been a Foreign Service child would have realized the extent of her responsibility?*

ENGLISH: No. And that's where some tragedies come about. The wife can't take it.

Q: *You think it's very stressful.*

ENGLISH: It can be very stressful. It can be—friends, language, customs. I remember a great friend of mine had her first baby in Tehran—mud floors; second one in Algiers—was in a hotel, no hospital; the third one she had in Constantinople, and she said to have it in the American hospital in Constantinople where she just couldn't believe...

Q: *Sheer heaven, huh? [laughs]*

ENGLISH: And you just didn't think of not staying and having your baby there with whatever way you could.

Q: *My goodness. I would think that this was stressful. I wonder what the divorce rate in Foreign Service wives was?*

ENGLISH: I wonder. Of course, in those days, you didn't have divorces. In the way of my time in the Foreign Service, divorce wasn't a rampant thing the way it is now. But wives, not being able to stay in the country.

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Q: Just leaving.

ENGLISH: Just leaving and taking the children home. My mother, for instance, her mother and sister insisted that she leave her four little girls in Boston while we were having the war in 1914. And she crossed the ocean eight times to see her children and go back to her husband. She wanted to put us in Switzerland, but my grandmother wouldn't hear of it. And she was so brave. She crossed the ocean eight times.

Q: Indeed she was brave. Well, that...

ENGLISH: Tells you about her.

Q: Yes, it does. And it also gives me an insight into the problems of...

ENGLISH: There were problems often - if you had to be very discreet, you had to - and who you were too friendly with and not friendly enough with played a part; and what customs you accepted or what you wouldn't accept. It all played a part. It was very natural when you'd grown up as I did, so that it's only in looking back that I see how difficult it must have been for some people. I didn't realize it at the time.

Q: Yes. This whole conversation with you and the privilege of reading your father's book certainly has been eye opening to me.

ENGLISH: But if you scrap the tape, remember I'll understand because it is not what you really wanted.

Q: Oh, indeed, it is. Who else could tell me these things. Don't you see what a contribution this is to the general field of knowledge about the Foreign Service. This is just wonderful.

ENGLISH: Well, the word service meant to me the Foreign Service and it was the most wonderful life, and I couldn't think of not belonging to the Service. And when I married into

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it, that was so natural, and I wouldn't have thought of marrying someone who wasn't in the Service.

Q: Is that right?

ENGLISH: Yes. And I loved going. I was ready to go from post to post whether I was pregnant or whether it was saying a lot of sad good byes—I was so used to accepting it. We had, my husband and I, some very good posts. We were very privileged.

Q: Oh, well, I'd like to hear about those if you're not too tired of talking.

ENGLISH: Oh, no. It was really we'd come to a very prosaic time cause I was in Paris when my first baby was born. Then we went to Ottawa and my second baby was born. And then we went out to New Zealand and there war broke out.

Q: Oh, the Second...

ENGLISH: The Second World War. And that's when I learned that my parents were going to be interned in Japan. They couldn't get out. And we could get back, we were transferred back to Washington and came back during the War on an old... I don't know if the name Mauritania means anything to you.

Q: Oh, yes, I know the name.

ENGLISH: It was converted into a troop ship. We came back without a convoy on the old Mauritania.

Q: My goodness, that must have been scary.

ENGLISH: I remember going around in circles a couple of days. The sun would be first on one side and then on the other because we were being chased by a submarine.

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Q: *Oh, my goodness [laughter].*

ENGLISH: We had seen the Marines arriving in Wellington coming from Guadalcanal. So that was the war to me - the wounded from Guadalcanal. So our being on the Mauritania wasn't anything to seeing those wounded coming from Guadalcanal. That was one of the most searing experiences I had.

Q: *I'm sure.*

ENGLISH: It was that was rough. But they set up wonderful hospitals for them in Wellington. New Zealand was wonderful. New Zealanders, I think they are wonderful people.

Q: *Yes. I get the feeling they are very open and friendly.*

ENGLISH: Very. And natural and on the ball and friendly and just I think we can always get along with New Zealanders.

Q: *Is that typical of the British, of the people in the Dominions?*

ENGLISH: I think so. My sister was in Australia and she would say the same thing about the Australians.

Q: *And then you went to Canada?*

ENGLISH: And we were in Canada before going to New Zealand. We were in Canada before the war and then we went to New Zealand. And then we came back to Washington and, it was war years, and so I kept the children in New Hampshire while my husband had to go to Edmonton to the consulate in Edmonton. Then when he went back to Ottawa, it was a question. It just would have been too difficult for the children then to uproot them. I had them in Hancock, New Hampshire. So I didn't join my husband in Ottawa that second

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time. Then they named him to the Philippines and he didn't feel well enough to go. He had health problems.

Q: *I see.*

ENGLISH: And so he resigned from the Service. (End of tape)

Q: *Oh, I see. You were telling me that your husband resigned from the Service because he didn't feel that he could go to the Philippines. You said that you and the children had been in Hancock, N. H. I get the feeling that New Hampshire is a large part of your family's...?*

ENGLISH: Yes

Q: *Was that sort of an ancestral home?*

ENGLISH: It was my grandmother's summer home. And then she gave a cottage on the place to my mother as a wedding present, so it became our summer home. And we dug roots in there. So where ever we were in the world, 'Where do you come from?' "Oh, Hancock, N.H." It was our home. We always thought of it as home.

Q: *You needed a place that you can call home, didn't you?*

ENGLISH: We'd lived in Boston, we'd lived in Washington when my father was in Washington we lived there. But when we talked of this country, Hancock, N.H. was home.

Q: *Is that where your sisters are now?*

ENGLISH: One sister lives there now. Elsie Lyon lives there now, she is retired with her husband and they live there. My other sister Lilla still has her house there but she lives in Manchester, Massachusetts.

Q: *I see.*

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ENGLISH: But all the children... Edith has just come back from Hancock.

Q: You don't mean Edith, do you?

ENGLISH: Edith Spenser.

Q: Oh, your niece.

ENGLISH: My niece. Yes.

Q: Oh, all right.

ENGLISH: The great nephews and nieces and my son uses my house there. I still have the family house. And my daughter lives in Dublin, N.H. so we're very connected to Hancock, N.H.

Q: Indeed you are. It sounds almost like the Kennedy compound. There are several English homes...

ENGLISH: Well, Grew. Of course, now it's all different names. It's not so much on a compound. Yes, we three sisters homes were all on the same land. But, for instance, my husband bought a property that adjoined it and now my son is developing that, and he has two sons that are helping to develop that. My daughter lives in Dublin and her three children all want to live round there.

Q: Both your sisters married Foreign Service people, too.

ENGLISH: Yes, we all three for a while were married to Foreign Service officers.

Q: Now is this possibly because these were the people you met when you were marriageable age?

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ENGLISH: Right.

Q: It wasn't that you made up your mind that you were going to marry someone in the Foreign Service, was it?

ENGLISH: I don't know. I can't answer for either of my other sisters because my eldest sister was in Washington still, going to school when she met Pierrepont Moffat and he was in the State Department. He was a great friend of my mother's and father's. But my younger sister was out in Tokyo with my family when she met Cecil Lyon and I just couldn't have thought of not marrying into the Service. It was life for me. [laughter]

Q: Well, that speaks wonderfully for the Service.

ENGLISH: Yes, yes. It was a wonderful life. And I must say when I look back on the countries I had a chance to live in and the trips and travels...

Q: A fantastic experience for you.

ENGLISH: My friend Bill, who is here, has also done a great deal of traveling and we every now and then - it comes up - on board such a steamer, or in the days when it took five to seven days to get across the ocean. We're so glad we had those experiences.

Q: Oh, I'm sure you are. I can even remember when it used to be a pleasure to travel on the train.

ENGLISH: Yes, yes.

Q: And I can't say that with any conviction anymore.

ENGLISH: Not anymore. But I used to love trains. In fact, one of the little notations I had was trains, boats, and long motor drives.

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Q: *Oh, tell me.*

ENGLISH: No. no. But I mean I was just thinking they were so much a part of my happy life.

Q: *Yes. And it was such a gracious way to live, it seems to me. Your father loved cars, didn't he?*

ENGLISH: Yes. He loved cars. It might interest you to read his description of the trip from Paris to Copenhagen, the 11 day drive.

Q: *Oh, yes. But tell me what you remember.*

ENGLISH: Well that was such a wonderful trip. But I have his diary of that. I was circulating that around the family two or three years ago. This old touring car and he piled his four daughters and a nurse and a mechanic, and he and my mother. And we attached to it a little trailer. A trailer in those days was a glorified wheelbarrow...[laughter]...a covered wheelbarrow. It carried all the suitcases and supplies. And we went all the way from Paris to Copenhagen by car.

Q: *What fun.*

ENGLISH: Because he was transferred.

Q: *Now there weren't motels at every fifty miles those days. What did you do?*

ENGLISH: Well, we'd stop at a village and find out. Well we had a chance to plan a little bit cause the first stop was Rheims and then Luxembourg, I remember. But we broke down in a village in Germany, Gniessen, and we happened to break down outside a garage type repair shop. What was it Gniessen, I think was the name of the village. And my mother said, "Oh, I'm not going to stay here, Joe. I'm going by train to Berlin." She left my father with two girls and the nurse and mechanic and she took the two other girls in the train to

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Berlin. And inside of twenty-four hours, the timing chain on the car had broken. You know a car with a timing chain sounds like the old days, doesn't it?

Q: Yes, yes.

ENGLISH: And they repaired that. But I remember that as a wonderful trip. It was so exciting, all across Germany to Berlin. Then from Berlin to Copenhagen. And at one point they had to put the car on a flatcar. And then that went on to the ferry. The train on the ferry, and we were on the top to get across.

Q: *You were sitting in the car?*

ENGLISH: Well we could sit in the car. We didn't have to, but I did, because I remember the excitement to be in a car on a train on a boat.

Q: *On a ferry. [laughter]*

ENGLISH: I was eleven years. That was just the age to enjoy all that sort of thing.

Q: *Well, now how when half the family were in Gniessen and the other half were in Berlin, how did you get back together?*

ENGLISH: Well we drove to Berlin. My mother went to a hotel in Berlin and waited for us. And so when the car was repaired and we drove much longer stretches than we could have if we'd all been together because we didn't have to stop as often.

Q: *Yes. I wouldn't have any idea how far Gniessen is from Berlin. Was it a days journey, two days journey?*

ENGLISH: I think it was just one long, long day. I think that's what I remember. I remember going through Gotta which is right near Gniessen and then to Berlin and we arrived at the Esplanade Hotel that night.

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Q: And you all stayed in the hotel?

ENGLISH: In the hotel. And then in a couple of days we set off for Copenhagen.

Q: Oh, well, that would be a trip you will remember always, isn't it. It sounds like such fun. You stopped at farms for lunch, or restaurants?

ENGLISH: Picnics. We had picnics and then we'd get to an inn or a hotel for the night. I don't remember any complications with meals. I remember we had a lot of that traveling chocolate you have for mountaineers and skiers—you know those chocolate bars.

Q: To keep your energy up.

ENGLISH: We had those tucked in the back of the trailer in case we needed it. But it was - driving through the country - and then, in going through Germany, which was so soon after the war—you'd see people saying, "Oh Americana, Americana."

Q: Were they friendly?

ENGLISH: They were friendly. As I remember it they were friendly.

Q: Well, I'm glad. How, speaking of cars, did you say the place in Hancock was your grandparents?

ENGLISH: Grandparents. My grandmother, Perry.

Q: Was this where they were born?

ENGLISH: No. My grandmother Perry and her husband had some friends, the Tudors, who had been going to Hancock for the summer, so they bought a cottage in Hancock for the summers. And they were going to be near the Tudors. And the land is still adjacent.

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And my grandmother was an artist, would find such wonderful scope for her paintings. She was always...well, so many of her paintings were around in New Hampshire.

Q: I understand there has been an exhibit of her paintings in Washington.

ENGLISH: Yes, there has been one in Washington.

Q: And I think I read somewhere that your grandmother was a friend of Monet?

ENGLISH: Yes. Monet taught her a lot. My sister was born in the little house right beside Monet's house, because my grandmother was in the house beside Monet's with one daughter, and my mother came there to expect the baby and then have the baby, her first baby. And so my sister Edith, the eldest, was born in the little house beside Monet's house. In fact, I have somewhere, a photograph of Monet and the baby. And Monet taught my grandmother so much. They were very good friends, and he was a wonderful teacher. They were very great friends.

Q: I'll have to be sure to see he paintings then. Did you know him?

ENGLISH: No. When I was old enough to see the place, he had already died.

Q: How did your family travel to New Hampshire? This would have been by horse and buggy, horse and carriage?

ENGLISH: Yes. Almost. I remember the car coming from Manchester, Massachusetts from one grandmother to Hancock to the other grandmother—five tire bursts—taking all day. Taking all day what is now a two and a half hour drive—took all day. From Manchester, Mass. to Hancock, New Hampshire. But going from Boston, there was a train that went right through Hancock, there was a station there. And then the horse and buggy would meet us there. And we'd come for the summers. This was during the war years.

Q: When you were in Boston?

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ENGLISH: We were in Boston for the winter.

Q: That must have been such a deprivation for you, to be without your parents.

ENGLISH: Well, it was, especially for my two older sisters. They felt it much more than I did. But it was a deprivation, but we were fortunate that we had very caring grandparents and aunt and a very wonderful nurse, sort of a nurse protector, who looked after us.

Q: Well, that was a help. A warm mother figure.

ENGLISH: Well she was very good person. She was an English woman who looked after us, Nurse Graeme. And she lost a son in World War I. She was a Trojan. She stayed with us while the war was going on in her country.

Q: That was a tragedy. All wars are tragedy, but that one was horrifying, wasn't it. Well, I have just one more question because I fear I'm wearing you out, but, do you have any special memories of your posts around the world as a Foreign Service wife, anything in particular. You spoke of how warm the New Zealanders were.

ENGLISH: Yes. And Hungary. I loved it. I had all nationality friends there. It was for a young, newly married, and with a sick husband, they couldn't have been nicer and more wonderful. And when he got better, we had such a good time, wonderful times. Three years, a very happy post. And I'm afraid, instead of taking the job so seriously, I just took being a wife very seriously. But it was the job. I look back on it and think what good friends we made there, all nationalities—very good friends. And there was a lovely spirit there. It was a much more - there was a light touch in Hungary you didn't find in Switzerland or Germany, it was a lovely, light touch.

Q: More joie de vivre?

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ENGLISH: Joie de vivre. And even though they had been through the worst part of every kind of war experience, they picked themselves up and were dusting themselves off, and...

Q: Oh, I like that spirit.

ENGLISH: Yes. It was a wonderful spirit.

Q: Were you ever any place where anything catastrophic or sensational happened. No revolts, no earthquakes, no storms.

ENGLISH: No. I can't think of any. I mean, the friends who experienced the big earthquake in Japan, I remember hearing about that and then the revolts. I remember people sending us headlines from newspapers in this country where it told about the outbreak on the border with Yugoslavia—the war that was breaking out. And we in Hungary didn't experience this as it appeared in the papers here. I remember there were all the time outbreaks of one sort or another in European countries, but somehow they were magnified in the papers. I was in New Zealand when Pearl Harbor took place. That was my worst experience.

Q: Yes.

ENGLISH: War experience. They were already at war when we were out there. The blackouts at night... Pull your shades down and no lights on, and the harbor was not lighted. And, you know, I'm afraid I haven't anything better to tell.

Q: In a way, that's a nice thing to be able to say, isn't it?

ENGLISH: Yes.

Q: And I'm glad it was a happy experience.

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ENGLISH: They were all happy experiences. And also an education because one thing that I realize in reflection how it made me accept not only all peoples, but no matter what they were doing they were friends or whatever their role was, one felt so close to people. And I suppose that was because I grew up in it. I mean, a child and then a growing girl—it was so natural to think that everyone was one's friend if they were friendly. And I don't remember feeling what one sometimes experiences in this country now—that oh, racism or bigotry or divisiveness. And I'm so glad I grew up with it in me so that it's a very natural thing.

Q: I think you're very fortunate.

ENGLISH: Yes, I am that way to have that feeling about all peoples. I don't mean to [imply] in any other way than what the Foreign Service can do for their children growing up and going to the different schools and the countries and having friends of other nationalities. It can make them just [warm hearted] people.

Q: Well, that's a wonderful benefit.

ENGLISH: It is. It really is.

Q: It would certainly compensate for many things.

ENGLISH: Many things. I was brokenhearted when I couldn't get back to Bryn Mawr. I was headed to Bryn Mawr and I had to do one more year of studies in Turkey and then I was going to college. And I felt so disappointed I couldn't come back. And I had my roommate all lined up, everything. And I'm so glad it worked out that I didn't, because I had those extra years in Turkey, all that experience, and lived a very different sort of life.

Q: More than the equivalent of a college education, I'm sure.

ENGLISH: Well, it was the sort of life that was right for me.

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Q: I think you should follow your father and write a book. You are just a wonderful narrator and you have so many things to say.

ENGLISH: You're very forgiving of my being just chatty. I hope I haven't jumped around too much.

Q: No, this has just been one of nicest...

ENGLISH: And I don't know if I've answered the question the way you wanted it.

Q: You answered it exactly right, everything I asked. I've just run out of questions and I feel I have been too pushy with them, so if there's anything you want to say.

ENGLISH: Oh, dear Mrs. Phillips, you have not been pushy. In fact, you've done something I never would have expected. You've made me so comfortable that I've just been chatting.

Q: Well, that's fine. I think I'd like to hear this. We were talking about the informality of my daughter's life and you were saying that young men just didn't drop by the house.

ENGLISH: We weren't set up for it - young men dropping by. It was by invitation or planning a large picnic or quite a group going off on a trip together. There was very little choosing and dating in other countries. I don't know how it would have been if we'd been over here.

Q: I wonder how it is today?

ENGLISH: Well, I wonder how it is today because I should think that it would be even harder today. For instance, in Turkey, I could take walks alone over countryside walks. And in Switzerland, I could go for long walks alone. You couldn't do that now.

Q: Oh, heavens no. You mean because of terrorist activity, kidnappings?

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ENGLISH: Terrorist, kidnappings, yes.

Q: That's right. That must make things much more difficult.

ENGLISH: Yes. I can understand why parents would want to have their sons and daughters have their schooling over here. To be able to have the friends, the contacts, because it would be even harder now.

Q: Yes. You and your sisters were educated mostly at home by a governess?

ENGLISH: Governesses, and I went to a finishing school when I was twelve. I was sent down to Switzerland with my older sister. We went to the French and German school in Switzerland. But it was a finishing school. [laughter]

Q: At age twelve, you were finished [laughter].

ENGLISH: At age twelve, I was finished. It was convenient. It was near a friend and it was convenient for my mother to send us on ahead when they were coming to Switzerland. But my friends were fifteen, sixteen, seventeen years old - nice, wonderful English, Irish, Scottish girls, wonderful friends, but I was only twelve.

Q: My goodness. Could you keep up with them?

ENGLISH: No.

Q: Was it difficult then?

ENGLISH: Well, it was an experience. But I was perfectly happy. I suppose because my parents came down to Bern and I was able to see them from time to time. Now I wasn't...

Q: No. I think you have a wonderfully resilient personality. You're happy. You are flexible and you just...is this just a characteristic of your sisters, too?

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ENGLISH: Yes. But I think that it what that beginning life out of the Foreign Service gives one is being flexible because you keep having sudden changes or different languages to speak. One person will talk to you in one language and the other in another language like that, turning, you know. And happenings and suddenly going from one country to another and then the way things affect other people. When you care about people and things that affect...I remember Chilean friends, how I was so interested in the how things affected them so differently to me. Puerto Rican friends to have affected them so differently.

Q: They responded to a situation more differently?

ENGLISH: More differently, yes. I suppose that really it makes one very flexible.

Q: It is a matter of temperament. Well, were the customs the same. I mean, in the diplomatic circles. Did you leave calling cards, and...?

ENGLISH: Yes. All that. I lived through the very formal... You left a calling card when you arrived, you left a calling card to thank for a dinner, and you were very punctilious about the - certain routines - entertaining and being entertained. And often the entertaining was just for your hard work. You had to be sure to have a good conversation with somebody you hadn't met before.

Q: Oh, I see. Mercy. There was a certain protocol, seating people?

ENGLISH: All along the line. Oh, yes, and I took over and helped my father one year when his private secretary was away for vacation. And I became his private secretary and I did all the menus and the place cards and then I would put them around the table. And suddenly one evening, we sat down to dinner and my handwriting was so good and neat and everything had been so carefully done, I found I had got a husband and wife side by side.

Q: Oh, mercy.

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ENGLISH: Unthinkable [laughter]. Oh, how we laughed. And those days you laughed very much behind your hand at something like that. The earnest budding secretary to her father [laughter].

Q: Everybody forgave you.

ENGLISH: Oh, yes. And Daddy couldn't have cared less. He was wonderful. He was so...

Q: Now I do remember in his book he spoke about somebody being on his right and somebody being on your mother's right.

ENGLISH: That was very important.

Q: Who sat next to whom? Who was the guest of honor?

ENGLISH: The guest of honor on the right. And the next one would be on the left, that corresponded. And then you'd have to get the importances all sorted out, and then you'd go down...

Q: My goodness, if this were not a matter of rank, on what basis did you assess the importance?

ENGLISH: It was very tricky. And sometimes in Turkey, if it was a government dinner, somebody from the Foreign Office would come over to look and see what the seating was. And if they didn't like the seating for their particular guest of importance, he wouldn't show up at the dinner.

Q: Oh, how stuffy.

ENGLISH: Yes, it was [laughter]. You ran into that. Some very interesting sort of...being very caring about your importance.

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Q: Well, my goodness. Was it the position of the host in descending order from the host that these people were seated?

ENGLISH: Yes. And you had to weigh whom you invited to the same party. You had to be sure that you knew who would be on the right and who would be on the left. And not have too many bigwigs, so that they wouldn't have to end up at the ends of the table.

Q: Yes, I can see that that would be a problem.

ENGLISH: You had to choose your lists very carefully. Oh, I remember working over those with my father. The lists, and they are whom to invite and when and to which type of party you'd invite them. And then the seating of them. And we'd have some light touches. We had a British couple who were visiting Sir George Clark and they were really rather stuffy. And we...my mother and father entertained for them and it was a very slow spoken, it might have been twenty people for the dinner, very quiet speaking for the cocktails before dinner and then dinner was announced. And then proceeded into the dining room in style. And all during the supper, all during the meal the conversation was quiet, I think difficult all around. And coming out of the dining room you didn't have to take the arm of your escort; ladies came first and men followed. And my mother said to this lady what'shername, "Oh, this is the chest I was telling you about. You see I had it fixed so you could sit on it. The back was raised and I had a seat put in." And she turned around and the two of them sat on this chest she'd had fixed so you could sit on it, with a beautiful carved back up against the wall, and the seat caved in [laughter] and there were my mother and lady with their feet in the air. And my mother had such a wonderful sense of humor and she came up laughing so completely convulsingly that Lady What'shername was laughing, and that broke the ice. It turned out to be one of the happiest dinner evenings because they also wanted to break the ice and be informal. They had been so entertained, you know. You know we often referred to that in my family, This is the chest I made so you can sit on it." [laughter]

Q: Oh, that was fun, wasn't it?

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ENGLISH: Yes, those light moments. And when the ice gets broken, because sometimes it can be very chilling when you don't know each other yet, and you have to be careful what you're talking about, whether it's religion or politics or just the weather.

Q: Yes, my goodness. Well, somebody should have arranged to have more chairs break or [laughter] but not soup spilled on anybody's lap, I guess. Was it easy to get help everywhere?

ENGLISH: Yes, you could get help everywhere. The different embassies and the ones in the Foreign Service could have help. It was inexpensive and there were so many people just longing for work. We had nine nationalities in our embassy in Constantinople.

Q: As a matter of fact, I was wondering if maybe you'd had an English governess or someone.

ENGLISH: Yes, we did. Oh, very much the English influence because we had an English governess when we first got to Europe in 1919, our English nurse left us and we had an English governess and then a French governess and then in Denmark an English governess. And then that boarding school I told you about, the finishing school, was English run. We had to learn French and German but it was English run. I've been very much under the aura of English as a language.

Q: That was the influence I noticed and that reminds me, and I don't know why I remember things like this. I read somewhere that Thomas Jefferson had a Scottish tutor and so he spoke French with a Scottish accent. That must have been something to hear. [laughter] But tell me now, you were saying you had a French housekeeper in Turkey?

ENGLISH: In Turkey, yes, there was a French major domo, Madame Elise, who really looked after the whole staff, all the nine nationalities. Her husband was the chef and when I married my mother made me take, or rather had sent to Budapest, a personal maid who had been looking after me in Turkey. And she was sent up to Budapest to meet me

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there when I got there. Poor darling, my husband was so sick and in the hospital, there was nothing for Valentine to do so finally she had to be sent back to Turkey. But with her going back to Turkey, I was left having to learn, such simple things about looking after my clothes and my...anything to do with a house and clothes—I'd been looked after [laughter]. But little by little I learned.

Q: I guess you do. But that's almost like baptism by fire, isn't it? And I think if one came back to the States where it wasn't that inexpensive...

ENGLISH: Yes, that would be very difficult, coming back spoiled, to this country and then really having to....During the war I did come back to this country, to New Hampshire, when we came back from New Zealand. I hadn't ever cooked. I had to learn to cook up there in Hancock and you didn't have things put aside—everything was rationed—and we had nothing put aside when we came back. And I had to learn to cook and to manage, because it meant budgeting every grain of sugar or tea or whatever - remember the rationing - you're too young to remember the rationing.

Q: In World War II, I was a bride.

ENGLISH: You were a bride. So you do remember. Rationing was tough to come back and plunge into and to learn to cook.

Q: Yes, of course, mercy, yes. You couldn't afford to throw anything away if it were inedible or poorly cooked [laughter]. Oh, well, I can see there were goods and bads.

ENGLISH: Well, I was so glad to have that experience, I really was. And I had two darling children, they were a girl and a boy, very different, and they entered into the little village school and adapted to the American ways very quickly.

Q: Has any of the younger generation gone into Foreign Service, your children or your sister's?

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ENGLISH: No. They really haven't. Looking to see - no, they haven't. My sister's son is, oh yes, I forget, of course, that he's of the younger generation—Peter Moffat—is my eldest sister's son. He has been right through the Service. He was ambassador in Chad recently. And he came back. He's been deputy head of the War College in Washington. And he's now...I think he's attached to the State Department. I don't know just what he's doing. And his wife is a wonderful Foreign Service wife.

Q: Well, all right!

ENGLISH: She has been in Chad. In Trinidad, she was superb. They have been... She's really been a good half of the team.

Q: Your father would be proud.

ENGLISH: Oh, yes. Pam is a real trouper.

Q: She's carrying on the family tradition. Well, I'll stop for the second time then. Thanks again. This concludes the interview.

BIOGRAPHICAL DATA

Former Spouse: Robert T. English (Deceased 1980)

Entered Service: Grew up as Foreign Service offspring; became FS spouse in 1932
Left Service: Divorced 1950

Posts: After marriage 1932-35Budapest, Hungary 1935-37Paris, France 1937-40Ottawa, Canada 1940-42Wellington, New Zealand 1946-48Edmonton, Canada

Status: Divorced widow of Foreign Service officer

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Date/place of birth: Berlin, Germany, 1909

Maiden Name: Grew

Parents:

Joseph Clark Grew

Alice Perry Grew

Schools: Private tutors and three years at Madeira School, Washington, DC

Date and place of marriage: February 1932 - Constantinople, Turkey

Profession: Foreign Service wife and housewife

Children:

Daughter born in Paris, France

Son born in Ottawa, Ontario

End of interview